

Socialist Worker

For Workers Power and International Socialism

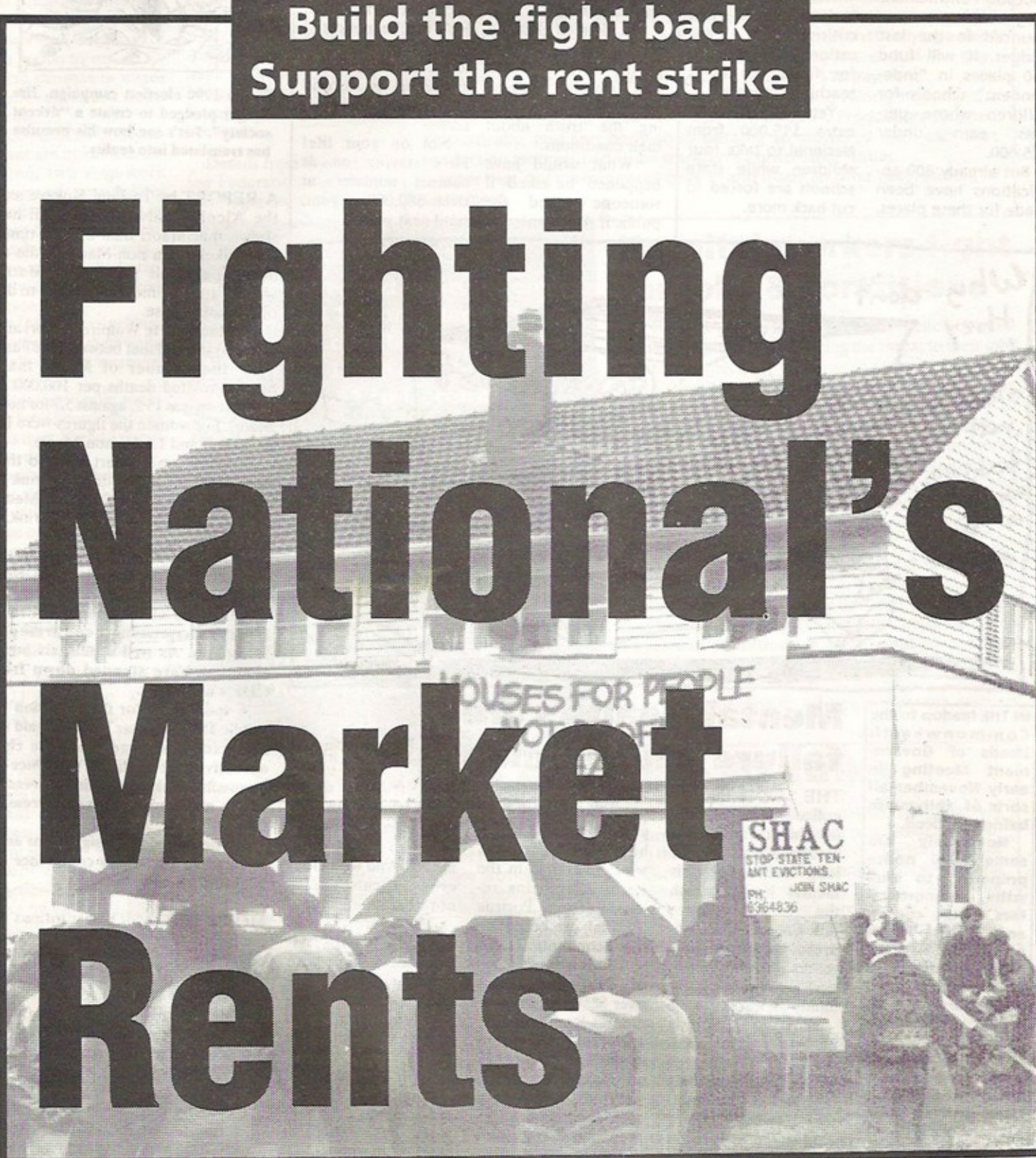
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**Build the fight back
Support the rent strike**

Fighting National's Market Rents



Nat's handout to private schools

by ANDREW GEDDIS

THE NATS are paying out \$12 million dollars for low income children to go to private schools while funding for state schools continues to be cut back.

The "Individual Education Entitlement Program" was announced in the last budget. It will fund 160 places in "independent" schools for children whose parents earn under \$25,000.

But already 800 applications have been made for these places.

Teachers groups have criticised the scheme as it completely fails to provide a high standard of education for all children.

Also, the schools being chosen for the scheme are questionable.

Titirangi Rudolph Steiner School was criticised by the Education Review Office for failing to meet teaching standards.

Yet it is getting an extra \$15,000 from National to take four children while state schools are forced to cut back more.

Warren Cooper lies easy in his feather bed

WARREN COOPER, National's Minister of Internal Affairs, accused firefighters in May of protecting "an incredibly feather-bedded lifestyle" through the upcoming referendum on Fire Service "restructuring".

He claimed that the reason the public supported the referendum was simply because firefighters weren't telling the truth about their conditions.

"What would have happened" he asked "if someone asked the public if they wanted to

pay firefighters \$44,000 a year to spend more than half their time sleeping or on down-time, and so they could keep their second jobs?"

Well, now Warren Cooper has made his bed he can lie in it. He's just been elected Mayor of Queens-town. So will he be giving up his second job as cabinet minister?

Not on your life! He's staying on as cabinet minister, at over \$80,000 a year, until next year.

Bolger's Decent Society



In the 1990 election campaign, Jim Bolger pledged to create a "decent society". Let's see how his promise has translated into reality.

A REPORT by Te Puni Kokere and the Alcohol Advisory Council has shown that Maori men are 2.7 times more likely than non-Maori to die of alcohol-related problems. Maori women are 1.6 times more likely to die of the same cause.

Te Maori me te Waipiro (Maori and alcohol) showed that between 1987 and 1992 the number of Maori male alcohol-related deaths per 100,000 of population was 15.2, against 5.7 for non-Maori. For women the figures were 1.8 for Maori and 1.1 for non-Maori.

But the same report showed that 13% of Maori males did not drink at all, compared to only 6% of non-Maori. 40% of Maori women did not drink.

THE RECENT announcement of the resignation of Wairarapa CHE chief executive John Peters means that 7 of the 23 heads of the country's Crown Health Enterprises have quit in the past 18 months. As well as this, six board members have stepped down from CHE's nationally.

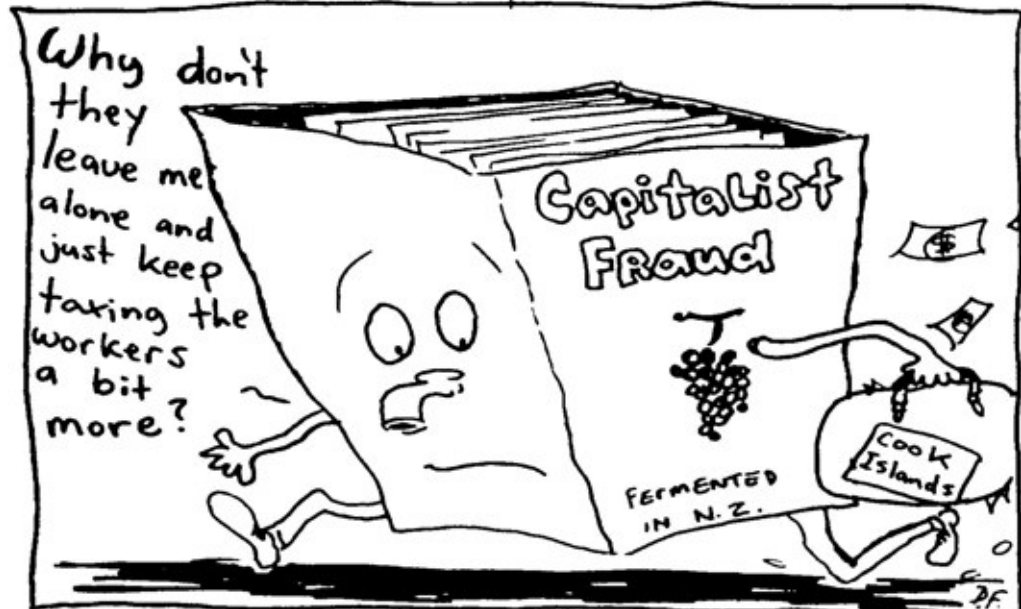
A spokesman for the Coalition for Public Health, Peter Roberts, said the resignations showed that "the chief executives are realising they face an impossible task of meeting increasing health needs with an ever decreasing budget."

He described the resignations as "a resounding vote of no confidence" in National's health "reforms".

MORE TERTIARY institutions are having to raise their fees in order to cover for decreasing Governmental funding.

Auckland University is raising its fees by 15% for next year, meaning a standard flat fee of \$2128 for a full time course. Rises will also occur at Waikato (19%), Lincoln (18%), Victoria (17%), and Massey (20%).

Dentistry students at Otago face a 72% rise in their 2nd and 3rd year fees to \$17,900.



IN THE leadup to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in early November all sorts of things are being practiced.

Not only are some 2000 police preparing to deal with demonstrators at the conference, but the resort of Millbrook outside Queenstown is preparing to host 58 leaders for a retreat after the meeting.

To help out, 58 pupils at Arrowtown School have been drafted in to play the parts of the actual leaders.

Mental Health care failure caused mans death

THE SHOOTING by police of Eric Gellatly in Invercargill last month followed a year long decline in his mental health which the health service failed to detect or address, according to a report by senior forensic psychiatrist Dr Sandy Simpson.

This report follows on from a Schizophrenia Fellowship survey which found that "only one part of the country, Hawkes Bay, is considered ... to have efficient mental illness

services." As a result, cases like that of a 39 year old woman with a history of depression, who gave birth in the street after being released from Porirua hospital, are becoming more common.

This is a direct result of National taking over \$250 million from mental health in 1990 and putting mentally ill patients into "community care".

While "community care" is often more appropriate than putting people into institu-

tions, it only works when there are adequate resources put into care for the mentally ill. And with Government cuts this is not what is happening.

There are 33 too few psychiatrists nationwide to cope with community care patients. In 1997 Kingseat Hospital in South Auckland will be closed.

With no resources, "community care" often means unpaid work by relatives - most often women.

How to beat market rents and slam the National Government

"We will win". That was the message State Housing Action Coalition chairperson Peter Hughes delivered to an Orakei rally on October 25.

Housing is one of the National Government's sorest points. Its market rents policies have brought widespread suffering to low income tenants who have been forced out of their homes or into overcrowding.

There is massive anger throughout the country against the conversion of state housing from a service into a profit driven company readied for privatisation.

For the last four years SHAC has been a thorn in the government's side. It has challenged the market rents policy head on, and has defended numerous tenants faced with eviction. In the main, tenants threatened with eviction have abandoned

their homes.

Where they have stood and fought, they have remained in their homes.

The latest HNZ attempt to throw tenants out onto the street is generating widespread anger.

Talkback shows have been running hot with attacks on the government's housing policies – and leafleting around the neighbourhood has received strong support.

Both Labour and the Alliance say they support a return to state rentals of 25 percent of income. Both say they are opposed to eviction of tenants like the Ringias. It is necessary to ensure these words are translated into concrete actions.

The Ringias must be



defended. Already HNZ has other tenants it wants to throw out of their homes.

If HNZ is defeated in this case then a big hole has been driven through

the markets rents policy. And National's market driven policies will have suffered a big blow.

Build the fightback – support the Ringia's stand.

Metua and Vaia Ringia surrounded by jubilant SHAC members and supporters after the Auckland Tenancy Tribunal hearing, October 15.

SOCIALISM '95

**WELLINGTON
Aro Valley Hall
December 2 – 3**

- The growing anger – building the socialist alternative
- Socialists and women's liberation
- Sack the Nats – how to make a better future (panel debate)
- Why *Socialist Worker* is your paper
- Trotsky's contribution to Marxism
- What is the road to tino rangatiratanga?
- Socialists and the unions
- Overseas speakers invited

Cost \$10 waged, \$5 unwaged. Half-price for one day only. Accommodation included for out-of-towners.

Bus transport from Auckland will pick up in Hamilton, Rotorua and elsewhere. \$40 return. (Please book early.)

Send application for registration to:
Socialism '95
Box 8851
Auckland

French tests

Is the struggle over?

PRIME MINISTER Bolger says the struggle is lost.

National has ridden up in the opinion polls with its anti-nuclear posturing. While Labour and the Alliance have suffered because neither has been prepared to take the issue beyond the Nat's agenda by organising concrete mass actions that would put the heat on both the French and Bolger.

It is not too late!

It is not too late either for the Trade Union Federation – which has endorsed the idea of union actions against the tests, but has not yet initiated direct actions against French officialdom, shipping or air traffic – as has happened in Australia. Such action would win widespread working class support for TUF, showing it as an organisation of action, and it would render the Employment Contracts Act inoperable.

The struggle is not over.

Picket Against French Tests

**French Embassy
Wellington
12.30 pm
December 2
(Saturday)**

Alliance and Labour politicians will be invited to receive the petition calling for the French Ambassador to be thrown out till the tests stop

All welcome

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inside the system

Don't get sick, Don't grow old

SOUTHERN CROSS Healthcare, a private health insurance company, likes to portray itself as a caring corporation with only the health of its clients in mind.

But that care depends very much on you paying your premiums. And, if you are old, those premiums go up, and up, and up....

At age 65 Southern Cross increases its subscription rate by 112 per cent for Ultra Care, 140 per cent for Multi Care, 121 per cent for Super Care, and 144 per cent for Regular Care.

So much for caring for all!

THINGS THEY SAY

"Well, of course, we are no longer the nation of equals that we once were back in the 50's. The rich are richer, the poor are poorer, and crime is increasing - but that is not the heart of our problem."

•Graeme Lee, leader of the Christian Democrats.

"...the foundation for true prosperity and an ordered society is values - and particularly sound moral values."

•Graeme Lee on what is missing in New Zealand today.

"Of course it is easier to 'surf' the anti-nuclear wave than to explain to public opinion why Europe ... needs a nuclear deterrent now more than ever."

•Pierre Lellouche, French presidential envoy.

"This is an unstable atoll ... I would say that this situation constitutes a high risk. All the factors which we now know favour destabilisation in volcanoes are gathered together at Muroroa."

•Professor Pierre Vincent, French volcanologist.

"Forty-nine percent [of hotel owners] questioned are already affected by the syndrome of the bomb."

•MKG Conseil group, on the effect of nuclear testing on tourism in Paris.

"The interviewer pressed me further on this and I detailed those conditions."

•Jenny Shipley, National's Minister of Health, on why she released confidential information in breach of the Privacy Act about the health of James McKeown, who had been refused dialysis treatment.

Business is feeling good

THE LATEST New Zealand Economic Indicator's Report shows that business confidence is up.

"On balance, businesses now expect the general business situation in New Zealand to improve over the next six months" claims senior research economist Philip Briggs.

But that is hardly surprising. While wage levels remain flat or falling, business profits continue to go up.

Electricity Corporation reported an after tax profit of \$386 million for the year ended June 30.

Brierly Investments Limited has reported a record profit of \$431.7 million for the same period. Its worth was \$3.7 billion as of June 1995 - an amount it intends to increase by \$2 billion in the next three years.

So no wonder businesses are feeling so confident. Wouldn't it be nice if we had as much to look forward to?

Why are these people our guests?

THE MILITARY rulers of Nigeria will be amongst the guests at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting being held in Auckland in early December.

This is despite the recommendation of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) group that Nigeria be excluded and economic sanctions be put in place against it because of its appalling human rights record.

Since a military coup in 1994, the Nigerian government has imprisoned and tortured opponents, as well as suppressing media criticism of its actions. While other Commonwealth countries, such as Sierra Leone and the Gambia, are also ruled by military regimes, the CHRI has found that Nigeria's human rights record is the worst.

Which raises the question of why the National government is spending nearly \$12 million hosting a conference of people such as these.

HEALTHCARE OTAGO has announced it will no longer be providing long-term care for the elderly.

The CHE's chief executive, John Ayling, explained that "at prices offered by the Southern RHA, the continued provision of care of the elderly services is not financially viable for Healthcare Otago."

Too bad if you actually need care!

what socialists say about...

Will socialism make us dull?

SOCIALISTS WANT everyone to be equal, but that will just bring everyone down to the same level. Everyone and everything will be just the same - grey, mediocre and boring.

Like so many of the arguments against socialism ("you can't change human nature", "There will always be leaders", etc.) this has been repeated so often that it seems almost common sense.

In fact, it is a classic piece of capitalist "ideology" - the system of ideas developed by the ruling class over centuries which describe the world from the viewpoint of that class and which justifies its domination of society.

The idea that equality will be boring is wrong because it looks at the whole question from the top down, from the point of view of the privileged view. As a consequence, it doesn't admit that if privilege and inequality are necessary for individuality then capitalism, by its very nature, condemns the large majority of people to uniform failure.

Routine

Capitalism ensures that most people do routine, boring jobs for roughly the same low pay and live in the same cramped, miserable conditions. If individuality is dependent on inequality, what individuality is there for workers on the production line or for people living in state housing?

It is typical of capitalist thinking to identify individuality and achievement with wealth, property and privilege. But this ignores the fact that amongst any group of people living and working in the same conditions - be they children at school or workers in an office - there will be a great

diversity of personality.

However, the great flaw in this anti-socialist argument is that it completely misrepresents the kind of equality socialists stand for.

Socialism means giving the majority control over the way things are produced and distributed in society. At the moment all these decisions are in the hands of a tiny minority, who use their control to enrich themselves and enable them to buy luxury goods.

Equality under socialism means giving all members of society a say in the decisions that affect their daily life - decisions about what is produced, how work is organised, and how resources are to be used.

It would mean taking the resources currently used in meeting the luxury needs of a very few and turning them over to be used for the whole of the community.

Diversity

By doing this socialism would mean an increase for the majority in their living conditions.

If every child has a good home, a good diet, and an enriching education, and if every adult has a socially useful job with shorter working hours and universal childcare facilities, will that make everyone the same?

No. It will enhance and increase individuality, creativity, and diversity.

But for this working people must overthrow a society in which the freedom and individuality of the privileged few are based on the exploitation and oppression of the vast majority.

■ JOHN MOLYNEUX & ANDREW GEDDIS

"No requirement for morality"

MANY OF New Zealand's biggest corporate brains seem to have spent a lot of time and money in the 1980's finding ways to avoid paying tax.

The key word is "avoid" because tax avoidance is legal, while tax evasion is illegal – although the end result might appear to be exactly the same.

After the Labour Government threw open New Zealand's finance markets, big business had a field day. And the existing tax laws had trouble keeping up.

Through the efforts of Fay Richwhite and the BNZ, a company named European Pacific was set up and began operating as a taxation facility in the Cook Islands.

Taxes returned

Roughly speaking, the deal was that profits could be transferred through EP in the Cook Islands. Tax would be paid to the CI government and appropriate receipts obtained.

These receipts could then be produced to the NZ Inland Revenue Department, so as to save the indignity of having to pay tax twice.

The strange thing was that the companies got most of the tax money back too (The CI government seems to have made a profit along the way, as did EP).



Brierley's Paul Collins
"Extradition" fear

Fay Richwhite and BNZ got rid of their EP shareholdings some years ago, but no one seems to know who is running it these days.

The Cook Islands Government has enacted secrecy laws that make it a

serious criminal offence for anyone to reveal details of these financial transactions – and that includes giving evidence to the NZ enquiry.



Brierley's Paddy Marra
Aircraft troubles?

Describing the situation of the 1980's when the EP saga began, former high-flyer in Fay Richwhite Stephen Maud told the winebox enquiry "there was no requirement for a morality call".

"If you were able to do it within the rules, you could do it. The professionals were not asking whether or not it was fair that you did it."

That probably sums up the morality of capitalism.

As the enquiry drags on more and more big names get bandied about. Bank of New Zealand, Post Bank, Fay Richwhite, Brierleys, KPMG Peat Marwick, Magnum Corporation, New Zealand Wool Board. Just where each fits in is very hard to tell.

KPMG Marwick is the former auditor of the company at the centre of the whole business, European Pacific.

European Pacific has got a permanent injunction from the Cook Islands court against KPMG to stop its officials disclosing documents from its Cook Islands office to the enquiry.

Evidently CI chief justice Sir Peter Quilliam decided that Cook Islands law took precedence over any moral issues arising from tax dodging.

EP is itself no stranger to legal action.

When the whole business started to leak out in the early '90s EP took legal action to stop the *National Business Review* and *TVNZ* exposing details

about the affair.

More recently EP's lawyer was thrown out of the winebox enquiry because he wouldn't or couldn't say who he was working for and what his client's NZ address was (if it had one).

Apparently there is more than one European Pacific, and the honourable lawyer could not say which one was still operating, which has been liquidated, and exactly who he represented.

Presumably he got a pay cheque from someone – but who remains a mystery.

Law abiding

European Pacific, it seems, is so law abiding that it will move heaven and earth to obey the Cook Islands secrecy laws.

Whether that can be described as morality or convenience remains to be seen – but there have been suggestions that EP, or its associates had more than a helping hand in the drafting of the Cook Island secrecy legislation.

As someone once said – thank god for coincidence.

Of course a lot of people in these companies whose names pop up at the enquiry must know a fair bit about what was going on – but it's those Cook Islands laws you see.

Frightened

Its incredible how many of these corporate officials pass through the Cook Islands on business or holiday and are frightened of falling foul of CI law and taking a forced vacation in a local jail.

For example, Brierley chief executive Paul Collins said he was afraid of being extradited to the Cook Islands (apparently overlooking the fact that this would need the highly unlikely approval of NZ courts).

Another Brierley executive Paddy Marra raised the fear that he might be passenger on a plane that developed engine trouble and have to land in Rarotonga.

Former BNZ go-getter Peter Travers (well known for his dynamic leadership)

Winebox enquiry

developed a bad case of corporate amnesia in the winebox witness box.

In contrast, former Cook Island audit director Richard McDonald who in 1987 had told NZ tax officials about dubious tax deals being done through CI and who had been threatened with prosecution for "treason" if he gave evidence, nonetheless took the stand.

Probably the most incredible thing about the whole business is that its happening at all.

If you or I didn't pay our taxes we'd be in court or behind bars in minutes. Not that we have much choice, because the "Pay As You Earn" system means that the IRD dips its fingers into our pay-packet long before we see it.

It also removes money for student fees repayment and "liable parent" payments.



BNZ ex-boss Peter Travers: Memory loss

IRD even has power to extract cash from your bank account, to drag you before the courts and do almost anything else to squeeze every last drop of blood from you.

Through the wonders of modern tax laws the IRD extracts tax on the interest in children's school savings accounts at the rate of 24 percent (or 33 percent if the unfortunate child doesn't obtain an IRD number).

So why can't it nip the corporate high flyers in the bud? Why couldn't it go through these big outfits like a dose of salts and clean the whole affair up?

IRD staff in Auckland claim that they came under

fire from head office when they questioned the legality of some Cook Islands tax deals.



NZ First leader Winston Peters

One even claimed he was victimised in his job after suggesting that a deal was fraudulent.

From evidence presented it appears there were "untouchables" in the corporate world who local tax officials had to treat more kindly.

The winebox saga is an exposure of the double standards of the corporate world. These are the people to exhort us to obey the law and pay our dues. They are the user-pays advocates, the ones who pull the financial and political strings in NZ society.

To these high-flyers the workers must make sacrifices to increase competitiveness and benefit "the economy".

What the enquiry is showing is that the corporate contribution to society is like their contribution to production – less than nil. Its living proof that workers need the exploiting class as much as a dog needs fleas.

That's not a conclusion the learned judge is likely to make. Nor would NZ First leader Winston Peters, the champion of the disgruntled middle class, who forced the issue by dumping the winebox documents into parliament.

It leads on to the obvious conclusion that workers need to dump this lot off their backs and run society for the benefit of all.

General strikes in France, Western Australia: This is the way to fight!

MILLIONS OF workers in France and Australia took action in late October against government attacks on wages and union rights.

"We have shut down France"

CHARLIE KIMBER
reports from Paris

"WE ARE going to stand together and bring down this rotten government. This must be just the beginning."

So said postal worker Eric Moine, one of the millions of French workers who struck for the day late in October in protest at the government's pay freeze.

The vast majority of public sector workers joined the action and even some private sector employees joined in.

Hundreds of thousands of strikers blocked the centre of Paris demanding that recently elected right-wing President Chirac goes, and takes his government with him.

"We have closed down the country. We have shown that we can close down the government," a striker told *Socialist Worker*.

The march in Paris saw hundreds of uniformed

postal workers, hospital and telecommunications workers stride through the streets.

There was even a contingent of 700 police behind a banner declaring "Police Against the Pay Freeze".

The massive strike comes as the government is reeling.

No other French leaders in history have seen their popularity collapse so quickly.

Prime Minister Juppé has seen his poll rating fall by 20 percent in a month. President Chirac's score has dropped 13 percent.

Alain Madelin, recently sacked as finance minister, told a business conference last week that the country's "top people" were as despised as the regime that was ousted by the 1789 revolution.

Commentators talk of an atmosphere of revolt

similar to May 1968, when ten million workers were on indefinite strike and France was on the brink of revolution.

The strike is the best response to the government's attacks. It can not only defeat the government but also sideline Le Pen's Nazi National Front which has grown dangerously in recent years.

The Socialist Party, the main opposition, gave only lukewarm support to the strike.

The great danger is that union leaders will hold back further strikes and not build on the success of this action.

If there is no left alternative then more right-wing politicians may make a move and promise a "strong" solution to the country's problems based on racism and attacking the poor.

Fantastic solidarity in West Australia general strike

THOUSANDS OF Australian workers took action against the anti-union legislation proposed by Western Australia's Liberal (National) Party government last week.

There was a fantastic response from workers to union calls to strike.

Public transport was completely disrupted. Western Australia's ports came to a standstill. More than 100 flights in and out of Perth were cancelled.

Striking truck drivers stopped fuel deliveries to 105 BP petrol stations and picketed state borders. All major construction sites in Perth were brought to a halt, and postal workers held up all interstate mail. No newspapers came out.

Even vehicle inspectors and road service patrols struck.

Strikers rallied in pouring rain outside

Parliament House. They then invaded the public gallery, chanting and shouting abuse at Liberal MPs who walked out.

Workers around Australia took action in solidarity.

Western Australian Premier Richard Court was forced to admit that the strike had cost at least \$70 million.

But it could have been even more effective.

The Western Australia Trades and Labour Council did not call for an all-out strike, leaving it up to individual unions to decide whether they would join the action.

An all-out strike called now by the Trades and Labour Council could finish off the anti-union laws for good and provide a massive defeat for the Liberal government.

World round-up:

Italy

ON OCTOBER 7 over 5,000 demonstrators, mostly high-school students, marched through Florence. The march was a militant response to recent attempts by Nazis to launch a racist anti-gypsy campaign against Romani people in the city.

A week before, the Nazis had organised a racist march against the Romani and other immigrants in a working class neighborhood in Florence. The racist slogans and fascist salutes of the 100 or so Nazis stopped abruptly when a group of militant anti-fascist youths confronted them and drove them off the streets – and in some cases, into the hospital.

On the same day, young

protesters occupied social centres and high schools along with unionists and delegations of anti-fascists from other towns in the Tuscany region. They made it clear there would be no tolerance for racists or fascists in "Red Tuscany," which was a centre of anti-fascist armed resistance at the end of World War II.

Detroit

IN DETROIT, hundreds of strikers and supporters blocked scab newspaper deliveries for the seventh weekend in a row.

This time the unionists lined up at the plants in the suburbs of Harper Woods and Troy. They succeeded in delaying the scab delivery of papers from the Troy plant until 8 a.m.

In Harper Woods, police and scabs hoisted newspapers over the fence to a public school parking lot, and blocked the strikers from approaching. When one striker tried, a group of Vance Security guards attacked him.

Members of the six striking unions have begun traveling the country on solidarity

tours, while outreach to workers and the oppressed continues in the Detroit area.

Bucharest

SPECIAL RIOT police units used batons and tear gas on October 20 to disperse a crowd of several thousand students.

Opposition groups condemned the show of force against peaceful demonstrators.

The students are demanding decent living conditions.

More attacks from Canadian Right but more protests

THE RUN-up to the referendum on Quebec independence is gaining apace.

For some time polls have consistently shown that the Federalist forces, opposed to Quebec separation, have had a strong lead. But in the last week the separatist forces have gained considerable ground, and are now considered to be even with the "No" side.

The Canada International Socialists have arrived at a Marxist position regarding the issue of Quebec, that position being a critical "yes".

That means that we support the notion of Quebec independence, but with some reservations. We see the issue of separation as an expression of autonomy on the part of the people of an oppressed nation.

We do not support any nationalism that capitalist leaders of both sides utilise in the debate, as it divides and separates the common class interests of both anglophone and francophone Canadians. However, we perceive that separation of Quebec may be a necessary step in establishing an independent Quebec, but that it may be considered the first step in developing a new and better relationship for Quebec in Canada.

This is a position that Lenin formulated in relation to the issue of independence struggles in the Europe of his day.

Lenin argued that there was no contradiction here between Marxist agreement with independence struggle, and the need for unity of working class interests across national borders.

It is my impression, as a newcomer to Canada, that the "No" side, the Federalist side, uses essentially racist anti-French rhetoric and economic threats to scare Quebecois to vote "No".

It is also my impression that most Quebecois understand that English Canada is racist, but feel they are in a no win situa-

tion.

A vote "No" is therefore not a vote of confidence in the Federalist forces. A vote "Yes" is not a vote of confidence in the Separatist forces.

Many Quebecois fear for their jobs, and economic security, as English Canada threatens economic backlash against them. But a vote "No" also means that the representatives of Quebecois in Ottawa do not have the support of a majority of Quebec citizens, and will therefore be politically weakened should they lose the referendum.

In other news, the Ontario Conservative Government has continued its welfare slashing ways.

The Harris Government is now threatening up to \$9 billion of further cuts in social spending.

Two recent incidents demonstrate the tactics that the Harris Government has chosen.

Create a crisis

The first occurred when Minister of Education Snoblen was caught on video, at a meeting of Education Board officials, blatantly suggesting that the Board "create a crisis" in public education.

He told his officials that they were to conduct a deliberate campaign to undermine the public confidence in public education.

The only comment that Premier Harris would make of this incident is that the Minister's comments were "stupid".

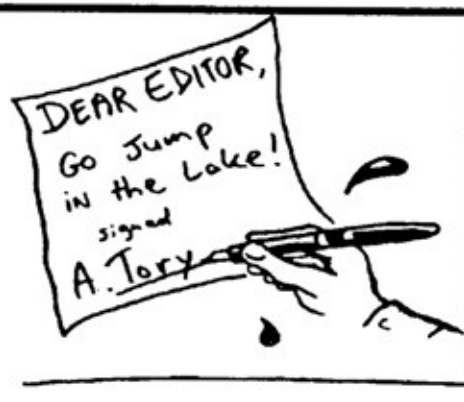
I am sure that the public were reassured to know that the man in charge of education required no intelligence!

The second incident occurred on October 16, when the Ontario government dissolved, without warning nor explanation, the publicly elected Ontario Hospital Committee, and replaced it with an appointed board chosen by the government.

The committee was about to publish a docu-

letters to the editor

Agree? Disagree? Send a letter to: *Socialist Worker*, PO Box 8851, Auckland. Keep them brief, please.



ment that it had been working on for nearly two years on how Ontario was to restructure the service.

The following morning the government decided to change its mind, and claimed that the "whole incident was a misunderstanding" and that the committee members still had their jobs.

This could have had something to do with the outcry that the move was greeted.

It should come as no surprise that as Premier Harris has begun a road trip attending a succession of fund-raising dinners, he has been met by protesters at every single location.

Many of these protesters had to be organised at the last minute as his schedule was made public, but significant numbers of protesters has turned out every time.

Celine Pinsent
Canada

Illegal strike on Liverpool docks

OVER 400 dock workers have been dismissed by the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company and associated companies. These men were amongst the last port workers in Britain to maintain trade union recognition at their place of work.

Virtually every other port in the country has been de-recognised and activists have been bought off, intimidated or victimised. It is now apparent that the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company intends to do the same in Liverpool.

The struggle started over the dismissal of men from a related com-

pany and has escalated into a battle against dreaded casual labour systems.

In ports like Liverpool the style of casual labour employment where employees were hired and fired on the whim of foremen, where union organisers were always overlooked, where wages were paid by the foremen to the hired men in local pubs and where kickbacks to the foremen were universally expected, was widespread.

The system spread to many other port-related industries like transport, and continued in Liverpool until relatively recently.

There is widespread resentment and fear about its return.

The dock workers took strike action immediately after the sacking of colleagues who refused to work without overtime payments. The Company responded by sacking the whole workforce.

In Britain, such immediate strike action, particularly when no secret ballot has taken place to endorse the action, is illegal.

The workers are appealing for support action and financial help to hold out.

per DG

ASBESTOS

The Auckland Branch of the Asbestos Diseases Association will be holding their Annual General meeting:

Communications & Energy Workers
Union Bldg

5 Nelson Street
Auckland City

Tuesday November 21
7pm

Business:

- Election of officers
- General business
- Asbestos hazards display

Everyone most welcome

Alliance and Labour: Plenty of talk but where's the action?

SUPPORT FOR National in the polls is higher now than at any other time since the 1993 election. The *One Network News* poll results for October show that support for the Nats is 49 percent of decided voters compared to 16 percent for Labour and 21 percent for the Alliance. In June this year the combined support for Labour and the Alliance was 51 percent as against 37 percent for the Nats.

At the same time that support for National, as measured by opinion polls has increased, the National Government has continued to push through its pro-business, anti-worker agenda.

The Government is continuing to cut funding for health, housing, education and welfare in order to fund more tax cuts for the rich. While the rich get

richer at our expense, the majority has not benefited at all from the bosses' recovery. Real wages and benefits are down, while university fees, mortgage payments, rents and the general cost of living are up.

And now that the steam is running out of the recovery, workers, beneficiaries and students are sure to be asked to tighten their belts even further.

This situation raises some important questions.

Why are the Nats leading in the polls?

Why have the Labour and Alliance parties failed to throw their weight behind the fightbacks against the Nats by workers, students and Maori?

How can we beat the Nats?

Brian Roper and Barry Lee investigate.

Local Body elections: Why Alliance lost

THE ALLIANCE was decimated in recent local body elections.

In the Auckland region, where the Alliance put in its biggest efforts, its number of local body positions fell from 80 to 20. High profile mayoral candidate Pam Corkery lost by 10,000 votes to sitting mayor Les Mills.

This was after a massive advertising campaign, and use of an expensive computerised phone system that allowed every household in Auckland to receive a personal message from Alliance leader Jim Anderton.

Alliance leaders have pointed to the fact that the Alliance vote went up by one percent, and attributed their defeat to the fact the right were united this time, whereas during the last elections the "Tories" were divided. But this only tells part of the story.

The last local body elections, which saw 80 Alliance candidates put into various Auckland bodies, came at a time when the Alliance had been active in a mass campaign to stop privatisation of Auckland public assets.

Pam Corkery and the Alliance waged a high profile campaign to stop the proposed sale of Auckland Regional Council shares in Ports of Auckland.

It generated a huge upsurge of public opinion. The Alliance campaign in the later local body elections was dominated by the "no sell-off" theme.

The right was split, but only

because of the mass campaign that had been built up. 31,000 people wrote protest letters. There was a mass Town Hall meeting and other protest activities.

The mass pressure forced local government minister Warren Cooper to announce the government would drop its legislation forcing the sale of port shares.

In this campaign right wingers like the Chief Executive of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce Michael Barnett, Auckland Mayor Les Mills, and Waitakere Mayor Asid Corban publicly opposed the ARC plans to sell its port shares.

Closely following the parts victory were protests over privatisation of power boards, which involved former National Party president John Collinge opposing the National Government's privatisation plans, and against the dumping of Auckland harbour dredgings in the Hauraki Gulf.

The Alliance played a prominent part in the latter.

Six months later the Alliance came out of the local body elections holding four out of six seats on the Auckland Regional Services Trust, the body set up to flog off public assets like the port company, busses, airport etc. It also held five seats on the Auckland Regional Council and almost half the Waitakere City Council seats.

Although there are plenty of issues that the Alliance could have been campaigning around before the latest local body elections, everything was sacrificed

in the drive for a conventional, high-pressure election campaign.

The result is that the right were united, and cornered a massive majority of the votes cast (around half the eligible voters).

Among the few successful Alliance candidates were environmentalist Peter Maddison who gained the only Alliance seat on Waitakere City Council. Maddison is well known in West Auckland as an environmental campaigner and recently got a special pipe installed under Sec-

nic Drive to allow a rare breed of frog to pass without being run over on the road.

In Auckland City one of the only successful Alliance candidates was Bruce Hucker, who has been outspoken on many social issues.

The ARST fell into the hands of the Citizens & Ratepayers – generally regarded as a National Party front in Auckland local body politics. C & R candidates also dominate the ARC and the City Council.

What are Labour and Alliance doing to fight the Nats?

DESPITE ALL of their anti-Nat rhetoric the only reason that National has been able to remain in power and push through its right-wing policies is because Alliance, Labour and NZ First have all helped to prop up the government.

Immediately after the 1993 elections when it appeared that the Nats would be unable to govern because of a hung parliament, Alliance leader Jim Anderton promised that the Alliance would not vote against the Nats on motions of confidence.

Then Labour broke with convention and supplied the Nats with one of their MPs (Peter Tapsell) to act as speaker. This reduced the

opposition vote by one.

Labour has further assisted the Nats to attack the poor in the interests of the rich by pairing – that is, removing its MPs from the house to allow National MPs to be absent from the house.

So even in terms of parliamentary politics Labour and the Alliance have done little to bring down the Nats.

No fight

But if its record in fighting the Nats inside parliament has been bad, the Labour Party's record outside has been disgraceful.

Labour has completely failed to give any active support to the struggles against the Nats taking place on the ground.

In the struggles of the sea-

farers against NZ Rail last year, or students against fees, or Maori for tino rangitanga – Labour MPs and members have been conspicuously absent.

While the Alliance has been better, and many of its members have a proud record of involvement in struggle, the electoral emphasis of the Alliance always downgrades the importance of strikes and protests.

They are seen as entirely secondary to the main goal – winning the next election.

We need to fight now

This highlights the major failing of reformist politics of the kind practised by Labour and the Alliance.

It focuses attention on parliament and elections rather than the strike action

and protests which is really needed to advance the interests of workers, students, Maori and the oppressed.

Labour and Alliance should stop propping up the Nats and start seriously pushing for an early election.

The sooner we get the Nats out the better. That is why we say vote Alliance.

Not enough

But getting the Nats out isn't enough.

Neither Labour nor the Alliance can be trusted to introduce policies favourable to the working class.

That will only happen if there is tremendous pressure from below – from workers organised in unions, from Maori, students and the oppressed taking mass action in support of reform.



The anger against the Nats is there – but what are the Alliance and Labour doing to answer this call?

Why real change cannot come through parliament

THE RICH create a state machinery to protect their property. Of course, they don't call this machinery "the protection of the rich brigade".

One of the great strengths of this machinery is that it pretends to be neutral. So we are told that the police are neutral, the judges are neutral, the civil servants are neutral and the press is free.

But in fact, as can be shown by countless examples, these institutions are all run by rich and privileged people for rich and privileged people.

They like to appear to be fair and rational and even handed, but where their interests and their prestige conflict they become ruthlessly irrational and unfair.

For the last hundred years their narrow, secret and unaccountable hierarchy has had to cope with a system of political democracy through which parliaments and local councils are elected by everyone.

How did the rich ever believe they could survive once the vote was granted?

Many believed they couldn't. Others, more progressive, felt that electoral democracy could be contained within the system, because the democracy which elected the governments could easily be humbled, bribed, bullied and contained within the existing system.

The chief reason for their confidence was that they could detect that the democracy of an elected parliament was pathetically weak.

"One person, one vote" sounds very fair and reasonable and so it would be in a society where all people were getting roughly the same.

But when say, a printworker has one vote and another person, their boss who owns five newspapers and has millions of dollars in the bank also has one vote, are these people equally represented in society?

Of course not.

The tycoon with one vote wields far greater power in society, including the power to hire and fire the printworker.

The power from below is further weakened by the infrequency of voting. The long periods in between votes weakens the connection between the representative and the represented.

To this is added the remoteness and majesty of parliament.

The constant pull of the ruling class – the fully-paid lobbyists, the glamorous surroundings, the quaint procedures – weakens the link between the elector and the elected and correspondingly weakens the power of labour to be represented in capitalist society.

We need a real socialist alternative

CLEARLY WE do need an alternative to the Nats. We all want to see the Nats out.

A victory for the Alliance and Labour at the next election would boost the confidence of workers and raise expectations of changes for the better. But the reality is that any changes brought in by an Alliance/Labour coalition would be minimal.

When you look at the vast gap between rich and poor, the continued existence of dire poverty in the midst of tremendous wealth, women's oppression and racism, and a world characterised by war, mass starvation and environmental crisis – it should be clear that we need much more than an Alliance government that will just tinker with the system.

We need a revolution in order to get rid of capitalism and build a democratic and socialist society that really would provide the basis for "environmental sustainability", economic democracy,

social justice and equality between Maori and Pakeha.

The key to fighting for both reform and revolution is workers' power.

It is the working class which has the capacity to change society because it is workers' who produce society's wealth. And it is workers, organised in unions, who have the greatest capacity to fight for higher wages, better conditions, and the expansion of the welfare state.

It is struggle on the ground, through strikes, protests and occupations which really counts. The Alliance's electoralist strategy diverts our energies away from these areas of struggle.

Past experience suggests that workers and the oppressed will have to be prepared to keep fighting – regardless of whether the Alliance, Labour or National wins the next election.

If you want to be involved in the struggle for a better world then the place to be is in the Socialist Workers' Organisation rather than the Alliance.

Socialism

Capitalism is a system of exploitation which generates inequality, crisis and war.

Although workers create society's wealth, it is controlled by the ruling class for its own selfish ends.

Socialism can only be built when the working class takes control of social wealth and democratically plans its production and distribution to meet human needs, not private profits. This will eliminate all class divisions in society.

Stalinist countries such as China and Cuba, just like the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, have nothing to do with socialism. They are state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers against every dictatorial stalinist ruling class.

Revolution not reformism

The present system cannot be reformed to end exploitation and oppression, contrary to what Alliance, Labour and union leaders claim. It must be overthrown by the working class.

Capitalism's parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class. These institutions cannot be taken over and used by the working class.



**where
we
stand**

To pave the way to socialism the working class needs a new kind of state – a democratic workers state based on workers councils and workers militia.

Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is global.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We fight racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support all genuine national liberation struggles.

We are internationalists because socialism depends on spreading working class revolutions around the world.

Liberation from oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We oppose the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific Islanders, lesbians and gays. All forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right

of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. Their liberation is essential to socialist revolution and impossible without it.

Tino rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for Maori self determination.

The government's approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers state.

Revolutionary party

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a mass revolutionary socialist party.

We are in the early stages of building such a party through involvement in the day-to-day struggles of workers and the oppressed.

The Socialist Workers Organisation must grow in size and influence to provide leadership in the struggle for working class self-emancipation.

We need to revitalise the unions with a rank-and-file movement.

If you like our ideas and want to fight for socialism, then join us.

Socialist Worker \$8,000

End of year appeal

The *Socialist Worker* appeal for \$8,000 will begin with the next issue – number 18 – and will carry on into March next year.

This is to help meet the difference between sales revenue and production costs, and to help us advance to a tabloid format in the new year.

The last issue of *Socialist Worker* for 1995 will be published on November 27, a week before the Socialism '95 conference in Wellington.

Socialist Worker provides an invaluable role in linking socialist politics with the day to day struggles of working people. It also helps to popularise those struggles, build solidarity and link working people around the country together into a movement that can beat the Nats.

Please give generously.

Donations should be sent to:

Box 8851

Auckland

SWO branch meetings – all welcome

AUCKLAND 7.30 pm every Tuesday at the Socialist Centre, 86 Princes St, Onehunga. Phone 634 3984.

☐ October 31 **Will multinationals control the 21st Century?**

☐ November 7 **Lotto: The politics of hope and despair**

WAIKATO 7pm every second Tuesday at the Student Union Building, Waikato University, Hamilton. Phone Ross in Hamilton 847 6302 or Karl in Huntly 828 9471.

☐ Next meeting November 7.

TIMBERLANDS 7 pm every second Tuesday at Apumoana marae, Tarawera Rd. Phone Bernie 345 9853 or Martial 357 4536 in Rotorua.

☐ October 31 **Socialists and the trade unions**

☐ November 14 **Restructuring of mental health**

WELLINGTON 7.45 pm every second Wednesday at the meeting hall behind St Peters church, Cnr Guzhnee & Victoria streets. Phone Gordon 387 7380.

☐ November 1 **Building links among the class**

☐ November 15 **Trade unions and politics**

Paper sales 12 noon to 1.30pm every Thursday at Manners Mall.

CHRISTCHURCH 7.30 pm every second Sunday at the WEA, 59 Gloucester St. Phone Roy 384 4681.

☐ November 12 **Fighting the New Right – the last 10 years in New Zealand**

DUNEDIN 7.30pm every Thursday at the Clubs & Societies Building, 84 Albany St. Phone Brian or Laurel 473 6047.

☐ November 2 **Will we always need bosses?**

☐ November 9 **What are the CHOGM protests about?**

☐ November 16 **Socialist Worker Public Meeting: Why is National still popular?**

OTHER AREAS The Socialist Workers Organisation also has members and supporters in North Shore, Paeroa, Napier, Kawerau, Raglan, Palmerston North, Timaru and the West Coast. They can be contacted via the Socialist Centre in Auckland (09) 634 3984.

join the socialists

- ☐ I want to join the Socialist Workers Organisation
☐ I want more information about membership

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Union/campus _____

Send to: SWO, PO Box 8851, Auckland

**"Philosophers
have merely
interpreted
the world.
The point is
to change it."
– Karl Marx**

World 'order' increasingly out of control

THE END of the Cold War, the media told us, would usher in a more peaceful and stable world.

The world was supposed to become an easier place for the rulers of the major countries, led by the United States, to manage.

But the fighting in the former Yugoslavia has once again shattered this myth.

The world – far from being more manageable – is getting increasingly out of hand.

The wars in the former Yugoslavia have presented a tricky problem for the US ruling class.

Bill Clinton's administration has been pursuing a particularly contradictory policy.

On the one hand, it backs the presence of the United Nations "peacekeeping" force in Bosnia, where its NATO allies France and Britain are playing a leading role.

On the other hand, the US has been involved in developments which, by destabilising the stand off between the Serbs and their opponents, make all out war and a UN withdrawal more likely.

The Croat army's defeat of the Serbs in the Krajina region and the victory over the Bosnian Serbs around Bihac would not have been achieved without American assistance in turning the Croat army into an effective fighting force. Indeed, the Croat army has been trained by US generals and secretly armed with US support.

Similar contradictions face US rulers in other parts of the world – and show the limits of its power.

Take the case of the Gulf – a strategically crucial area because it contains 60 percent of the world's oil reserves.

One of the main thrusts of US policy has been prevent any single local power from dominating the region.

US leaders were quite happy to let the two strongest Gulf states, Iran and Iraq, slug it out in a bloody and costly war for much of the 1980s.

It was only when Iran looked like winning the war in 1987

that the Americans intervened by dispatching a naval task force to Gulf to tilt the balance back in Iraq's favour.

When the victor of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein, got above himself and seized Kuwait in August 1990, the US was quick to intervene to punish him – or rather (since Saddam was safe in his bunker) his people.

But the defeat of Iraq solved nothing. Saddam's humiliation allowed his old enemy -Iran- to rebuild its economic and military strength and to assert itself as a regional power.

Now Bill Clinton sees Iran as a threat to the stability of the Gulf, and recently imposed an embargo on trade in Iranian oil.

The logical next step for the Americans to once again build up Saddam as a counterweight to the Iranian leaders.

New crises are also springing up elsewhere in the world.

East Asia is a showcase of market capitalism. The region has seen spectacular economic growth in the past decade and the emergence of new industrial economies.

But, like their counterparts elsewhere, the Asian states want to match their new economic strength with greater military control over territory and resources.

They have been spending some of their new wealth on the latest weapons systems – sparking off a regional arms race.

One potential flashpoint is Spratly islands in the South China Sea. Six states – China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei – lay claim to the islands.

China, potentially the biggest power in the region, has started producing maps which extend its borders to include not just the Spratlys but also Indonesia's Natuna gasfield.

East Asia could see bloody conflicts like those that have devastated the Middle East and the Balkans.

The world is becoming harder, not easier, for the US to control.

An ode to Labour

AT THE Labour caucus meeting the first day after THAT poll all the MPs sat in silence reflecting on Labour's soul. With the thought of their seats

being tossed in the streets and their hearts were as heavy as cheap dog roll.

They talked about 'getting the message across' and 'improving the leader's image' – perhaps it would help if Helen Clark had her hair done like Clem Simich? Or perhaps they should get a new brand name like ROC has gone and done and call themselves something like NICER THAN NATS or LEFT OF ATTILA THE HUN

Or perhaps they should mix with the peasants some more join fun runs and go to the League? "I've been doing all that and it still doesn't work" Helen said, looking grey with fatigue.

"We should kick all the intellectuals out" said Mike Moore "Get a real man to lead!" and he spat on the floor

and he farted and swore but not one of them paid any heed.

Then the youngest backbencher rose up from his seat

and nervously said to the throng "For the last sixty years we've been giving bum steers – OUR POLITICAL FOCUS IS WRONG!"



"We should side with the working class woman and man through thick and through thin and through hell we should organise protests and sit-ins and strikes and mass demonstrations as well Let the bosses look out for themselves without us we'll throw in our lot with the poor!"

All the caucus was hushed you could hear a pin drop And then Cullen said: "Son, there's the door!"

Now the caucus still sit trying to find a way out and all their ideas are old hat but the one that might work – the young backbenchers one they'll never give houseroom to that.

Socialist Review

Write to Socialist Review, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH or purchase a copy for \$3.50 from your local Socialist Worker seller or write to PO Box 8851, Auckland.

- Articles in the October issue include:
- Who will control the 21st century?
 - Spain 1936 & the fight for workers' power
 - Bosnia: what a carve up
 - Class distinction

The best socialist monthly magazine

Lessons to stop market rents for state house tenants today



Members of the Anti-Eviction League confront bailiffs in Nelson St Auckland in October 1931

Anti-Eviction League

DURING THE Great Depression of the early 1930s unemployment rose rapidly.

At its peak in July 1933, it is estimated that officially 81,000 New Zealanders were out of work. Maori men and women were particularly hard hit.

Govt attacks

The government and employers responded to the crisis by cutting wages and conditions, slashing pensions and cutting expenditure on health and education.

Many people had to abandon homes because they could not continue to meet mortgage payments.

In particular, many unemployed who fell behind in their rent payments faced the very real danger of eviction from their

homes.

Anti-Eviction League

In Auckland an Anti-Eviction League was formed to protect such people. Members of the League occupied and barricaded those houses under the threat of eviction, rallied neighbours for support, and attempted to prevent the bailiffs gaining access. In a number of cases these tactics were very successful in saving families homes, or at least gaining a respite.

Eviction order

In October 1931, the campaign reached a climax at 21 Norfolk street, Ponsonby. The tenant of the house was a woman with five young children.

After the rent was unpaid for 11 weeks, the landlord obtained an evic-

tion order, but the Anti-Eviction League occupied the house, nailed down windows, and put up banners which were tied to the verandah posts: "No Work, No Rent" and "Stop the Eviction". A red flag was hoisted above the roof of the house.

Occupation

Fifteen occupants faced the combined strength of police and bailiffs. However, after some skirmishes with the bailiffs, police reinforcements arrived breaking down the front door with crowbars and arrested the occupants.

As the bailiffs entered the house and moved all the family's furniture into the street, a crowd of up to 500 booed the police and took up a collection for the mother.

THE FIGHT to stop market rents for low income state housing tenants is heating up with Housing New Zealand (HNZ) threatening a number of tenants with legal action and possible eviction.

As the State Housing Action Coalition (SHAC) prepares to meet these threats with organised resist-

ance, it is timely to remember the experiences of the Anti-Eviction League. Set up 64 years ago in the midst of the Great Depression, the League tried to prevent the eviction of tenants who fell behind in their rent payments.

EVAN POATA-SMITH looks at that struggle.

Solidarity is strength

ONE OF the strengths of the struggles of the Anti-Eviction League was the extent to which they rallied neighbours and the community at large in solidarity with those tenants faced with eviction.

But the Anti-Eviction League also had a number of weaknesses which we need to learn from.

Crucial amongst these was the failure to link up the struggle with wider political issues.

Growing unemployment, wage cuts, cuts in health and education were all linked up - the bosses wanting to increase profits at a time of economic crisis - at the expense of workers and their families.

However, the Anti-Eviction League failed to link up the issues of the evictions of tenants with the wider struggles of ordinary workers and the unemployed against the attacks of the bosses and the government.

In this way the struggle became isolated from an irresistible force capable of bringing the government and the bosses to their knees.

Lessons for today

Today workers, ben-

eficiaries and their families are being robbed to fund tax cuts for the rich. Those attacking the wages and conditions of workers through the Employment Contracts Act are the same people who are wrecking our healthcare system and our education system with their user-pays philosophies.

They are the same people that stand to benefit from benefit cuts, the fiscal envelope rip-offs, market rents, and the sale of state houses.

Affordable and decent housing is something that the working class has fought for years for.

The Nats are trying to destroy that.

In the fight against market rents for state house tenants we must ensure that there is no divorce between "economics" - wages and conditions - and politics.

Ordinary workers, trade unions, students, beneficiaries must get right in behind SHAC in the occupations and picket lines to fight for affordable housing for those that need it and fight back against the profit driven, inhuman policies of the government and the interests of the bosses they represent.

Gems buried in the commercial treadmill

— by Barry Brown

JUST FINISHING on the box has been a season of seven locally-written fifty-minute television plays, running on TV1's rather stuffy Sunday night **Montana Theatre** slot.

Still running on TV3, **Coverstory** continues its hidden-from-view existence at 9.35pm on Tuesday nights.

It's ironic that one of the recent **Coverstory** episodes, written within commercial constraints, turned out to be so far superior to any of the single plays (I have yet to see the last of the plays, Peter Jackson's).

The **Coverstory** episode revolved around a shrewd, media-manipulative neo-Nazi historian visiting New Zealand from England to promote his book on "the myth of the holocaust". A disastrous (and very funny) attempt is made to get three white-power skinheads up from Timaru to Wellington to appear on

the same television interview programme as the historian.

In a chilling scene, the historian is confronted by a former German soldier who clinically describes disposing of the bodies from the Auschwitz gas chambers. Outside the interview studio, the leader of the white-power skinheads, very drunk, continues to goad a "coon" cameraman.

The cameraman, finally coming off shift and not one to muck about in his own time, takes the skin into a handy lift, smacks him one. The skin staggers out on to the streets of Wellington, stumbling into the historian. The skin's rage against the beating he's just been delivered is ironically turned on the historian's "pommie bastard" accent.

The white-power skin slugs the master-race historian, boots him, leaves him lying bloody and semi-conscious in the gutter.

It was compelling television.

Television should be giving writers who have earned their spurs (like Greg McGee, writer of the **Coverstory** episode above) six – or seven – episode series of their own, not just a slot on a commercial treadmill.

Of course this sort of task is resisted by New Zealand's ratings-driven, profits-driven television.

It's risky. And ratings-driven television cannot take risks.

When it ventures into drama, it spreads its unit costs over a dozen episodes or more and in the process draws out the dramatic material so thinly the most ludicrous of devices have to be resorted to in order to give the series what passes for substance.

Ratings-driven television requires writers simply to deliver a certain number of consumers into a market-place every eleven minutes.

It's this experience that so often saw the writers of the **Montana Theatre** plays lower their vision and sees magic like the Greg McGee **Coverstory** episode buried in a ho-hum 16-episode commercial series.

Financial consultants Ernst & Young, hired by TVNZ to draft ways in which the corporation could increase its record 1994 \$65million profit, have just recommended: "TVNZ should reassess the existing commitment to high-cost



Coverstory star Katie Wolfe

local programming that generate low or negative contributions to profits."

Coal, Class And Community

"They are headstrong, intellectually arrogant and too wedded to ideology. They live in gloomy valleys, they work in holes in the earth, they live on the West Coast where it is nearly always raining, where 80% of the men drink, drink, drink, in a wild endeavour to forget who they are or where they live.

"They define socialism as an economic proposition, say their prayers to Karl Marx and know nothing of the spirit of Ruskin, Morris, Edward Carpenter. In debate with them the air is thick with phrases such as 'the capitalist class', the 'class struggle', 'craft unionism', 'the class-conscious man', 'the economic basis of society', 'the proletariat'..."

So, in a fine spirit of Christchurch romanticism and haughtiness, wrote the editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, Ettie Rout, when the miners seized control of her paper from the shearers in 1911.

As Len Richardson, author of the recent **Coal, Class And Community: The United Mineworkers Of NZ 1880-1960**, writes, Ettie Rout "was unconsciously acknowledging one of the most distinctive features of mining unionism – the prominence of ideas... Viewed from the end of a pick, Marx's analysis became, for a good number of miners, the basis of a proletarian science. It was the template against which union actions and strategies were implicitly measured."

Coal, Class and Community is terrific history, looking at the vital impact the miners had on the union movement and the socialist currents in New Zealand. It's a broad narrative that covers the role of women, religion, drink ("The average drinker on the coalfields in 1919 put away annually 20 gallons of ale and beer and a little under one case of wines and spirits – a consumption rate which may

have scandalised prohibitionists, but would scarcely slake the thirst of others"), the constant battle between parliamentary politics and industrial unionism, and the always looming tragedy of pit disasters.

Together with the watersiders and seamen, the miners gave coherence and structure to the major periods of industrial militancy – 1884-90, 1908-13, and 1945-51. It's on these periods Richardson's history concentrates, and he gives good account of the treacherous nature of the union leadership leading up to, and including, 1951 (there are still people round today who will, justifiably, fly up in fury at mention of the names Crook and Prendiville.)

The book has the usual faults of labour histories: it's too expensive (\$40) and the pictures, while profuse, are often irritatingly small. Solve the first problem by going to your local library and asking them to order it; they will.

Midnight of the century

THOSE WHO haven't yet tuned their sets in to TVNZ's "community" stations (ATV, CTC, Capital, Southern) could well do so for **Blood Upon The Snow**, Thursday nights, 9.45pm. It's a ten-part British/Russian documentary series looking at Russia from the death of Lenin through to the end of WWII.

It deals with a period that saw the defeat of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (when the class was replaced by the party, and then the party by the general secretary) and the triumph of fascism in Germany: the midnight of the century.

I did notice, in the last episode I watched, that in its condemnation of Stalin's 1939 pact with Hitler, it made little mention of the transparent policies of France and Britain throughout the thirties to isolate the USSR and sic Hitler's dogs of war on to it.

However it's superbly illustrated with footage from Russian archives and contains anecdotal gems like the observation that Stalin always required half-a-metre be removed from the bottom of the drapes of any new chamber he had to enter – that way he could see the boots of anyone in hiding.



German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Stalin smiling after signing non-aggression pact

Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting

FORTY NINE heads of government and their hangers-on will be in Auckland for a week in early November for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

During this period unprecedented police numbers will swamp the city, civil rights will be curbed and the lives of thousands of ordinary Aucklanders disrupted for the benefit of the elites of all kinds of regimes that most of us wouldn't want anywhere

near our own homes.

CHOGM provides an opportunity for top-level horse-trading between big and small powers of the old British empire – sewing up trade deals, securing political alliances and wheeling and dealing in foreign "aid" for the less developed commonwealth countries. It gives an opportunity to present the world capitalist system in a bright light – with lots of smiling faces and apparent solving of points of international disagreement.

It gives military regimes like those in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia an opportunity to parade themselves as "acceptable".

It gives New Zealand prime minister Bolger and his government the opportunity for heaps of publicity and vote-catching.

It will provide an economic windfall for a select group of Auckland business, and it will cost the NZ taxpayer around \$8 million for the "pleasure".

Denial of civil rights

POLICE ARE taking unprecedented "security" precautions for the upcoming CHOGM conference.

2000 officers are to be on hand for duties, and nearly \$3 million of the police

budget will be used for the operation.

Aotea Square, traditional scene for protests, is to be completely closed off for a week, and many central city streets will be closed during busy times to

allow movement of visiting heads of state. Veiled threats about police response to protests are already being heard.

The police used the Asian Development Bank conference as a practice for CHOGM, and their heavy handed actions have drawn criticism from many quarters, including the Public Issues Committee of the Auckland District Law Society.

The committee has described police action dur-

ing the ADB conference as "beyond the permissible".

A police warning letter delivered to potential protesters before the ADB conference laid out police concerns for the rights and freedom of movement of ADB delegates, but totally ignored the rights and freedom of movement of protesters. By closing of Aotea Square and other areas during the ADB conference the police denied those rights to everyone but conference attendees.

The lawyers committee criticises the closing off of Aotea Square for CHOGM as "overbearing" and said that the "Bill of Rights appears to have been ignored".

"We do not consider that expediency or inconvenience justifies this curtailment of fundamental rights," said the committee.

"The example it sets is not of the promotion of democracy, but of its suppression."

"Social and economic partnership"

THE COMMONWEALTH Trade Union Council plans to push for a "social and economic partnership" between governments and unions at the Auckland CHOGM meeting. This fits in with the NZ Council of Trade Unions policy of trying to get a compact or accord with successive governments.

At the time when leaders of military dictatorships like that in Nigeria, where trade union leaders have been jailed, or supposedly "democratic" regimes like Malaysia where thousands of migrant labourers are held in concentration camps, are all gathered in Auckland, the

union leaders from around the Commonwealth will be pushing for a "partnership".

This is not something the NZ Government is interested in at the present time – because its agenda is to use the Employment Contracts Act approach to steamroll over union and any other rights to secure the profits of big business.

The Commonwealth partnership, if it saw the light of day, would involve the worst kind of class collaboration with the top-level of the trade union movement becoming conscripted into an arm of government – to carry government policies into

the working class movement.

In the more likely event that the plan becomes a lead balloon, it serves as a diversion at a time when the NZ and Commonwealth trade unions should be using the occasion to put the heat on these anti-worker regimes.

This means calling on their members to mount forceful protests both against the ECA here and in solidarity to those workers in other Commonwealth countries whose trade union rights are being denied and living standards driven down.

CHOGM Protests

Meeting place for all rallies and demonstrations at CHOGM will be outside the public library, Lorne Street in central Auckland (1st right off Wellesley Street heading up from Queen Street to Albert Park.)

Wednesday 8 November – 1 pm
Rally and demonstration

Thursday 9 November – 6.30 pm
Rally and demonstration. The Queen receives Heads of Governments.

Friday 10 November
– 8.15 am and 12.30 pm
Two demonstrations – the CHOGM meeting ends.

Rogues gallery of visitors

Some of the heads of government visiting Auckland for the CHOGM Conference include:

British Prime Minister John Major, whose government has consistently refused to criticise French nuclear testing (the only European Community outside of France not to do so). Britain has a secret deal with France to get data from the tests.

Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating whose government gave direct assistance to the Papua New Guinea war on Bougainville, actively supports Indonesian occupation and genocide in East Timor and supplies uranium to France.

PNG Prime Minister Julius Chan, whose government brutally suppressed the independence struggle on Bougainville so that multinational mining companies could return to plunder the natural resources and environment.

Nigerian President General Sani Abacha, whose government jails trade union leaders and opposition politicians at will.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga whose government has been waging a genocidal war against the Tamil independence movement for many years.

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir whose government suppresses any form of opposition so ruthlessly that it even censored BBC news broadcasts that it considered unfavourable.

South African President Nelson Mandela whose government recently passed a Labour Relations Bill that attacks the rights of the trade unions that played a central role in bringing down the apartheid regime.

Chemical Union Settlements

MEMBERS OF the Northern Drug & Chemical Union have achieved some significant settlements over recent months.

At **Chemical Cleaning** in Mt Maunganui, six workers took three days of strike action to win a 13.6 percent increase in wages and allowances in a union contract.

Also included in the settlement are union fees deduction, two stop-work meetings per year, right of union access, three days on full pay for delegate training and a one-year term.

The company had originally offered a 2 percent increase.

At **Gillette** in Auckland 25 workers had their wages and allowances increased by 6 percent.

Maternity leave provisions have been improved, as has their 12 and 3 redundancy deal.

Smith & Nephew workers in Auckland have settled with a 4.5 percent increase on wages and allowances and a 15 cent per

hour attendance bonus. Sick leave entitlement has been significantly improved.

Twelve workers at **ICI Resins** in Mt Maunganui received a 5 percent wage increase.

At **Wattyl Paints** in Auckland the 14 workers have gained a one-year contract with a 6 percent increase on wages and allowances.

Details from Trade Union Federation *Just Jobs, Just Wages* bulletin 8.

Workers action beats Honda Way

TWO DAYS of industrial action at Honda in Nelson resulted in a minimum wage increase of 3.8 percent on wages and allowances and payment for time lost in meetings. The contract expires in 9 months.

Honda management originally wanted a contract that included the "Honda Way" (a workplace reform scheme), a reduction in the number of delegates, a two-year contract and a totally new pay system.

In mid-September the company changed its "offer" to 3.4 percent on wages on a 15 month contract. At the same time management made numerous attempts to divide the membership.

Following a stopwork meeting in September, the workers voted to hold sectional meetings. This meant that one section after another stopped for a meeting of around 45 minutes - with the end result that only one third the normal number of vehicles were completed by the end of the day. Management retaliated by withdrawing a weekly \$12 payment.

The workers replied the following day by starting rolling stoppages, a ban on overtime and work "without enthusiasm". Production dropped dramatically, and the body shop became so cluttered with cars that production workers had to be transferred onto other duties.

Later that day management gave in and made an offer that resulted in settlement.

TIMOR VIGILS

As part of world-wide actions in support of Timor independence, a series of candlelight vigils will be held in Auckland from November 11 to December 7.

November 12 is the 4th anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre in Dili. December 7 is the 20th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion.

**QEII Square (Downtown)
Sunday November 12
Friday November 17
Friday November 24
Thursday December 7**

5 pm to 8 pm

Hospital workers fight for jobs & conditions

LONG SERVING cleaning staff at Christchurch and Burwood hospitals are fighting the threat to their jobs and conditions.

The Crown Health Enterprise has given its cleaning contract to a new company - P&O. Contrary to traditional practice, P&O wants the 120 workers to re-apply for their jobs on drastically cut conditions. P&O wants to slash wages, cut sick, bereavement and long-service leave, cut all allowances and end redundancy payments. It also wants the workers' jobs to end at the expiry of the contract.

The workers are fighting back. 24-hour pickets of the two hospitals began at midnight on October 27.

The workers want to put the heat on the CHE which they say has invited P&O to tender on these cheap wages and conditions in an attempt to undercut existing conditions and collective employment contracts.

They are appealing to other Christchurch workers for support.

WHERE'S THE ACTION?

ON 2 September 1994, CTU president Ken Douglas advocated a combined trade union campaign to fight for big pay rises.

He said unions should break the law if necessary to obtain the contracts they want.

But no observable practical steps have yet been taken by the head of the Council of Trade Unions to mobilise workers around a united pay campaign.

Dating from his speech, there's still

**no action
from Ken after
423 days**

Salvation Army on rent strike

THE FOUR South Auckland emergency houses run by the Salvation Army are refusing to pay market rents to Community Housing, a section of Housing NZ that deals with community social service providers.

The Salvation Army are paying a nominal \$10 per week each for the houses. Before the new rental company, HNZ, came into being they paid a peppercorn rent of \$10 per year to Housing Corp.

Salvation Army housing worker Ross Richards told *Socialist Worker* that from July 1995 HNZ was demanding full market rent for each of the houses. At the same time their Community Funding Agency (CFA) allocation was cut by 50 percent without any real explanation. Meanwhile there has been a huge increase in demand for the houses, with one home seeing 14 families in the space of one month.

With operating costs of \$90,000 per year and only a

50 percent recovery of costs possible due to the very nature of the service (housing poor homeless families) the Salvation Army cannot pay the market rents.

The Sally's wrote to Community Housing several weeks ago to explain why they had not, and did not intend to pay the new market rents. They would continue to pay the \$10 per week plus any CFA allocation provided specifically for housing but that was all.

Community Housing responded by insisting that the market rent must be paid and the matter was not negotiable.

At this stage no further action has been taken against the Salvation Army for taking part in the partial rent strike. It appears the Salvation Army's situation could be political dynamite for the government's housing reform policies and has been sidelined to the too hard basket for the mean time.

Rallying forces to defeat market rents

"I WANT to stay in my home," Metua Ringia told an enthusiastic crowd who braved bad weather to rally outside her Auckland home on October 25.

Metua and her husband Vaia have been threatened with eviction from their home of 17 years because they have joined the partial rent strike organised by the State Housing Action Coalition (SHAC).

The Ringias occupy a small 3 bedroom unit in Orakei, for which they are currently paying \$329 a fortnight in rent (including the \$85 a week Accommodation Supplement). Housing NZ is demanding a "market rent" of \$420 a fortnight, which the pensioner couple cannot afford.

They are being penalised for having extra bedrooms, regardless of the

fact they have been in the house for so long and the extra room allows them to put up grandchildren and other family members when they visit. Government housing policy denies state tenants these simple human rights.

HNZ took them to the Tenancy Tribunal earlier in the



Metua Ringia addresses rally at her home, alongside SHAC chairperson Peter Hughes (holding umbrella).

Chemical workers fighting skills-based pay

A.C. HATRICK



CHEMICAL WORKERS at AC Hatrick in Auckland have been on strike for over a week and are maintaining a 24-hour picket of their factory.

The company demanded a new contract

that includes skills based pay along with a 3.75 percent wage increase.

The workers want a 10 percent increase (which will take them up to the going rate for the industry) and to retain double

time penal rates and other provisions of the existing contract.

The company's skills based rate would wipe the penal rates.

Management say no-one would lose under this scheme - but the workers say this is rubbish.

Hatricks produces resins and chemicals used in paint bases etc for industry and is very profitable. Only recently management told the workers how many millions of dollars profit they had made last year.

Management figures showed that workers' wages are only 12 percent of company costs - but in spite of the huge profits the company wants to use its new pay scheme to screw the workers harder.

The 28 workers are particularly annoyed at the 'sign it or else' approach the company took to the contract.

They are getting tremendous support from passing motorists. Management have been trying to keep the plant operating at a reduced level, but truck drivers arriving at the plant are respecting the picket.

day, seeking an eviction order under a clause covering "breach of contract".

This was an effort to short-cut the legal requirement that a tenant

must be 21 days in arrears before an eviction order for rent arrears can be issued. The Tribunal rejected HNZ's application - but invited it to try again when the arrears reached 21 days rent.

After the hearing, over a hundred people stood in steady rain outside the Ringia's home to show solidarity. Large areas of Orakei and Glen Innes had been leafleted and postered beforehand to let people know about the possibility of an eviction attempt.

The crowd listened to speeches by State Housing Action Coalition chairperson Peter Hughes, Metua Ringia, local Alliance Candidate Rosalie Stewart and a number of other state tenants.

There was a very strong determination to fight any attempt to evict the Ringias.

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